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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND FM ZEBARI DISCUSS URGENT TOPICS

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) Summary. In a December 30 meeting, the Ambassador reviewed with Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA), suggesting that the GOI establish a negotiating team parallel to the U.S. delegation. On the Tuwaitha shipment, FM Zebari agreed to send a letter to the International Atomic Energy Agency to allow the US packing team to break the seals on the radioactive material in Tuwaitha. Zebari also clarified the status and restrictions upon Iraqi funds for refugee assistance in Jordan, but he was evasive in finding cooperative solutions to the problem with PKK on the Turkish border. End Summary.

SOFA is the First Part of the SFA

12. (S) Ambassador Crocker met with FM Zebari on December 30, accompanied by EMIN and POLMIL MinCouns. Ambassador explained that the U.S. approach is to negotiate the security portion of the SFA first, then move to the economic portion. The security portion would be concluded as a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). The Ambassador passed to Zebari a copy of the preliminary outline of the SOFA. The Ambassador noted that the U.S. is still assembling its team, with State Department lead, supported by Defense and other agencies. He suggested that Iraq should have a parallel structure. FM Zebari agreed that the Foreign Ministry should have the Iraqi lead, but he acknowledged that the Prime Minister's and President's advisors would seek involvement. The Ambassador added that it is National Security Advisor Mowaffak al Rubaie's stated position that the Foreign Ministry should lead because it has expertise in negotiations. The Ambassador advised FM Zebari that technical assistance from outside consultants (e.g. UNAMI experts) would be acceptable, but only the two governments should have a place at the negotiation table.

Tuwaitha Radioactive Materials Shipment

13. (S) The Ambassador and EMIN explained the urgent time constraints for the following events: requesting IAEA permission to break seals, packing of radioactive material, and granting of sale authority. A letter from the Foreign Ministry to the IAEA, requesting permission to break the seals, was most urgent because it was the first event in the sequence for preparation and movement. FM Zebari agreed to send a letter.

Refugee Assistance

14. (C) FM Zebari clarified that refugee assistance funds have been transferred to the Iraqi account in Jordan. He stated that from the GOI point of view, those funds were satisfactorily obligated in the 2007 fiscal year. The GOI intends to give the funds to Jordan. Zebari stated that Jordan has asked to give the Iraqi funds to an NGO, like

UNHCR or IRC. He said that Iraq would permit Jordan to give the funds to an NGO, but Iraq could not give the funds directly to an NGO.

Turkey and PKK

¶5. (S) The Ambassador emphasized that all parties must stay focused on the end of PKK presence on Iraqi territory. He further emphasized that purely kinetic operations will cause collateral damage and will not solve the problem. FM Zebari concurred with both points. The FM worried about the potential for "mistakes" to inflame the situation. However, Zebari did not acknowledge any recent bilateral contacts with Turkey. POLMIL MinCouns noted several proposals for meetings between Iraq and Turkey, but FM Zebari evaded the idea, describing instead a long list of pending diplomatic actions and activities.

Upcoming Diplomatic Initiatives

¶6. (C) FM Zebari was planning to go to Cairo on January 6 to talk about a "long term relationship" with Egypt. He stated that Egypt was keen to look at a joint resolution and to revive old agreements. He added that he was also planning a trip to Kuwait. Zebari said that he wanted to propose the names of potential Iraqi ambassadors to those two countries. He claimed that Russia was pursuing a "framework for a future relationship" with the GOI, but the Iraqi delegation to Moscow was postponed and would not travel until February.

¶7. (S) FM Zebari stated that diplomacy between Iraq and Iran was currently focused on the schedule for trilateral talks

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(Note: a date is still pending. End Note.) He added that the Algiers Agreement was under discussion and that the demarcation of the border needed to be redone due to the shifting of the channel in multiple areas within the Shatt al Arab.

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